

Washington, DC - United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan canceled his official visit to Iran today just hours before dozens of U.S. lawmakers were set to deliver a letter asking him to do so.

U.S. Reps. Mark Kirk (R-Ill.) and Rob Andrews (D-N.J.), co-chairs of the House Iran Study Group, had been circulating a letter to their colleagues this week, asking Annan to cancel his upcoming visit to Iran in the wake of President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's call for Israel's destruction and his regime's continuing defiance of the UN Security Council.

The letter garnered dozens of signatures of concerned Members of Congress and was set to close at 3 p.m. on Friday. Annan announced he would not go to Iran just hours before the deadline.

"An official visit to Iran by the UN Secretary-General would only reward a man who just threatened genocide against the Jewish people," Kirk said. "We formed the United Nations out of the ashes of the Nazi Holocaust and we cannot allow an international leader to threaten another one."

Last week, Ahmadinejad sparked an international uproar when he called for the Jewish state to be "wiped off the map." One day later he attended an anti-American and anti-Israel rally in Tehran where he reiterated his call for Israel's destruction and called the reactions of other nations "invalid."

"In addition to President Ahmandinejad's genocidal comments, his regime continues to ignore the Security Council's call to give up its nuclear ambitions and allow greater transparency in its uranium enrichment program," Andrews said. "At a crucial moment in diplomatic efforts to bring Iran into compliance, an official visit by the Secretary-General would legitimize the regime's current position and undermine the international community."

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